production of foodgrains is less than the average; if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) launched in the year 1992 covered 1775 blocks of the country located in the areas where the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP), Hilly Areas Development Programme (HADP) and Desert Development Programme were operated. Under RPDS, foodgrains were supplied for ensuring availability of upto 20 kg. per family per month in the identified 1775 blocks in the States/UTs at 50 paisa per kg. less than the Central Issue Price (CIP) for normal PDS.

(b) The Government is not considering reimplementing the said scheme. With the introduction of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) which covers "poor in all areas", the Revamped Public Distribution System with its emphasis on "all in poor areas" became redundant.

Making Essential Commodities Competitive in International Market

†161. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:
SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prices of wheat, rice and sugar in the country have risen to such an extent that the said items have gone out of competition in the international market;

(b) if not, whether it is also a fact that Government have increased the import duty to stop import of such items into the country;

(c) whether steps have been taken by Government to promote export of said items after restricting their import; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) and (b) It is not possible to compare the international and domestic prices as they depend on the international demand and supply position, consumer preferences and other terms of trade. However, liberalisation of trade has led to the increased availability of commodities to consumer, sometimes at prices that put the domestic produce at a disadvantage. With effect from 1.12.99 Government has imposed a duty of 50% on import of wheat. Further, with effect from 9.2.2000. Government has imposed an import duty of 60% alongwith countervailing duty at the rate of Rs. 850/- per metric tonne on import of sugar. The increase in import duty rate of these commodities has been made to discourage imports.

(c) and (d) The Export-Import (EXIM) Policy regarding agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximizing farm incomes, earning foreign exchange and augmenting domestic availability. Review of EXIM policy, especially relating to agricultural products is a continuous process and policy interventions are made as and when deemed necessary. As per the current EXIM policy, export of wheat is restricted subject to quantitative ceilings announced by the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) from time to time. For the year 1999-2000, an export ceiling of 1 million tonnes of wheat and an unlimited quantity of wheat products have been announced. Export of rice (both Basmati and non-Basmati) is allowed freely subject to registration of contracts with Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). Export of sugar is restricted and canalized through Indian Sugar General Industries Export Corporation Limited (ISGIEC). For the year 1999-2000, an export ceiling of 25,000 metric tonnes value added sugar in consumer packs upto 2 Kg. has been allowed in addition to 30,000 metric tonnes of Sugar allowed for export under the existing preferential tariff quota for the United States and the European Union.